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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Sixty-first year

Letter dated 7 December 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the press release of the one-hundredth session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was held in Jeddah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 12 Sha`ban A.H. 1427 (5 September A.D. 2006) (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 13, 14, 47 and 100, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdulaziz N. **Al-Shamsi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

06-65092 (E) 131206 181206

Annex to the letter dated 7 December 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Press release issued by the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its one-hundredth session, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 12 Sha`ban A.H. 1427 (5 September A.D. 2006)

The Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council held its one-hundredth session in Jeddah on Tuesday, 12 Sha`ban A.H. 1427 (5 September A.D. 2006), under the chairmanship of His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates and Chairman of the current session of the Ministerial Council, and with the participation of His Excellency Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The Ministerial Council reviewed the progress made since the previous session in a number of joint cooperation fields and developments relating to major regional and international political and security issues.

With regard to economic affairs, the Ministerial Council considered minutes and reports submitted by ministerial committees on joint economic action.

The Council considered the results of the 71st meeting of the Economic Cooperation Committee, held on 10 June 2006, including their conclusions regarding a customs union, the Gulf Common Market and a monetary union; the conclusions of the 10th meeting of the Ministerial Transportation and Communications Committee, held on 14 June 2006; and implementation of the memorandum of understanding on inspection and monitoring of ships in the ports of GCC States. It also considered the minutes of the 15th meeting of the Ministerial Planning and Development Committee, of 18 June 2006.

The Council considered the minutes of the 17th meeting of the Agricultural Cooperation Committee, of 19 June 2006, and the Committee's adoption of the two implementing regulations of the two regulatory laws on pesticides, fertilizers and soil enhancers. The Council considered a follow-up report on the detailed study of the proposed water linkage among the GCC States.

The Council considered the results of the 2nd meeting of the Technical Committee and the 1st and 2nd meetings of the working group to study the development needs of the Republic of Yemen, as well as arrangements for a donors' conference to be held in London on 15 and 16 November 2006.

With regard to relations between the GCC States and other States and international groups, the Ministerial Council reviewed the progress of negotiations with other States, including China, India and Pakistan. It expressed the expectation that these negotiations would be concluded as soon as possible.

With regard to humanitarian and environmental affairs, the Ministerial Council considered the Secretariat's memorandum on the progress of joint cooperation, particularly in education, health, the environment and nationalization of the labour force. The Council also considered the decisions of the 10th meeting of the

Ministers responsible for environmental affairs, held in the Kingdom of Bahrain in June 2006.

With regard to military affairs, the Ministerial Council considered the conduct of military cooperation activities during the preceding period, including preparations for the fourth conference of the Supreme Military Committee (Chiefs of Staff).

The Council expressed its satisfaction with steps taken in these areas, and emphasized the need to implement relevant decisions.

With regard to security coordination and cooperation, the Ministerial Council considered progress among the GCC States in the light of the Supreme Council's instructions and decisions and other relevant decisions in this area, and expressed its satisfaction with the implementing steps and measures taken in this regard.

With regard to the steps, mechanisms and measures adopted by the GCC States to combat the growth of terrorism, the Ministerial Council reaffirmed the established positions of the GCC States, which repudiate terrorism in all its forms regardless of the source. It reaffirmed the support of the GCC States for all regional and international efforts to combat that scourge, noting at the same time that confronting, combating and reversing terrorism can only be accomplished through international cooperation and coordination that promotes exchange of security information and experiences regarding the movements of terrorist elements and cooperation to frustrate their schemes.

The Council also calls on the international community to recognize that terrorism is a threat facing the entire world, and has no homeland, religion or nationality.

With regard to issues referred by the Supreme Council to the Advisory Board, the Ministerial Council considered the Board's views on economic citizenship and its role in strengthening Gulf citizenship, and its views on the importance of economic partnership in relations between GCC States and neighbouring States. The Council decided to submit them to the Supreme Council at its upcoming session.

On political matters, the Council discussed the overall situation in the region, and in particular the unjust Israel war against Lebanon and the brutal aggression against the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples. It also discussed developments in relations with Iran, the Iranian nuclear crisis, the situation in Iraq and in the Palestinian territories, the fate of the Middle East peace process, and recent developments in both the Sudan and Somalia.

With regard to the situation in Lebanon, the Ministerial Council followed, with great concern, the brazen Israeli aggression against Lebanon, reprehensible Israeli practices, the bombing of innocent civilians, including men, women and children, and the destruction of Lebanese infrastructure. The Council commended the heroic steadfastness of the sisterly Lebanese people and its devotion to its national unity in confronting the criminal Israeli aggression.

The Council reaffirmed its stand alongside the Lebanese people in confronting all the acts of aggression and destruction to which Lebanon has been subjected, and its belief that confronting such aggression was an Arab issue requiring a clear and firm Arab position. In this regard, the Council commended the results of the extraordinary meeting of the Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs, held in Beirut on

7 August 2006, and the practical and effective decisions issued by it giving expression to the unified Arab position that was sought in support of Lebanese legitimacy and of achieving unity of ranks and position, consolidating Arab action in dealing with the crisis and its implications, speaking in one voice on the international stage, and taking urgent steps to address the inadequacy of international action in the face of the Israeli aggression and the resulting destruction and catastrophes.

The Council commended the efforts of the Arab delegation and the outcome of the extraordinary meeting of the Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs, the active and effective role it played in the elucidation of the Arab point of view and the amendment of the draft text of United Nations Security Council resolution 1701, of 11 August 2006, in a way that responded to the basic requirements of legitimate Lebanese interests.

The Council welcomed Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), which called for a cessation of military operations in Lebanon, even though the resolution did not respond to all legitimate Lebanese and Arab demands, and stressed the need for all parties to comply with that resolution. It condemned violations being committed by Israel, and asked the international community to pressure Israel to lift the sea and air blockade being imposed on Lebanon.

The Council commended those States that had decided to send forces to augment the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to be deployed in the south of Lebanon in accordance with Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

The Council also expressed its support for Lebanon in its efforts to extend its full authority and influence over its entire national soil, and for any international effort to restore its full rights, including compensation for human and material losses resulting from the Israeli aggression. It also affirmed that it would continue to support Lebanon and contribute to reconstruction in the context of the joint Arab effort, as discussed by the Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs at their meeting on Lebanese reconstruction held in Cairo on 20 August 2006.

The Council called on the international community to continue its efforts and earnest endeavours to see that steps achieved so far are followed up by other practical and more comprehensive steps to ensure that the foundations of a permanent, comprehensive and just peace are laid in the Middle East.

The Ministerial Council commended the decisions by both the Republic of Costa Rica and the Republic of El Salvador to close their embassies in the city of Jerusalem in conformity with internationally recognized resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 478 (1980), which called upon the States of the world to withdraw their embassies from the Holy City. The Council also praised the positions taken by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in support of Arab causes.

With regard to Palestine and the Middle East peace process, the Council followed with great concern the savage and vicious Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people; the continued arrogance of Israeli forces; the waging of a war by Israel that targets civilians, including women and children; the razing of homes; the imposition of a harsh economic embargo on the Palestinian people; and the kidnapping of the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Higher Education and other members of the Palestinian Government. The Council considered those actions to be acts of terrorism and

flagrant violations of international norms and covenants, and demanded that the Government of Israel immediately release the abductees. The Council also called on the Security Council to discharge its responsibilities and urgently adopt resolutions to compel Israel to halt its aggression against the Palestinians, desist from its arrogant exercise of power and release immediately the abducted members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Palestinian Council of Ministers and other persons being detained in Israeli prisons.

The Council condemned the Israeli attacks on health facilities in Palestinian territory and demanded that Israel observe international covenants and treaties which guarantee the protection of Palestinian institutions, including health facilities, and medical teams from attack.

The Ministerial Council expressed once again its desire that the Palestinians should avoid all differences that would lead to greater division and have an adverse affect on the Palestinian cause. The Council also expressed its hope that all would endeavour to preserve national unity and strive together in order to serve the Palestinian people and their just cause.

The Council demanded that Israel withdraw from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, southern Lebanon and the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967.

The Council emphasized that security and stability in the region and the future of peace depended on finding a just, comprehensive and early solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine; that the war, exemplary punishments, blockades, assassinations, detentions and abductions practised by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory would not provide it with either peace or peace of mind; and that the United States of America, and the international community as a whole, must discharge their responsibility to stop the aforementioned Israeli policies and practices and to give impetus to the peace process in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy, human rights conventions and the international instruments governing the principles and practices of the international community.

The Council also expressed its support for the decision taken by the Council of the League of Arab States at its extraordinary meeting held on 20 August 2006 in Cairo, in which the League called on the Security Council to take up again the entire peace process, to discharge its responsibility to maintain international peace and security and to ensure the implementation of resolutions of international legitimacy related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the return of occupied Arab lands and the restoration of legitimate rights.

In this context, the Council of Ministers welcomed and stressed the importance of the visit of the United Nations Secretary-General, which came at a time when regional and international conditions required increased international effort and more focused attention to the issues besetting the region so as to make a positive impact on finding prompt and just international solutions.

With regard to the issue of the continuing occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the three islands, namely, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which belong to the United Arab Emirates, the Council reaffirmed, as it had in previous statements, its well-established positions on these issues, namely:

- To support the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over its three islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, and over the territorial waters, airspace, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone of those islands, as constituting an integral part of the United Arab Emirates;

- To express regret at the failure of contacts with the Islamic Republic of Iran to produce positive results conducive to a resolution of the question of the three islands in order to promote the strengthening of security and stability in the region;

- To consider all peaceful methods leading to restoration of the right of the United Arab Emirates to its three islands;

- To invite the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the efforts of the United Arab Emirates to resolve the question through direct negotiations or recourse to the International Court of Justice.

With regard to the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear issue, the Council called for a diplomatic solution to this crisis and urged Iran to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The Council also expressed its concern over the damage or environmental and humanitarian disasters that could be caused by the Iranian nuclear reactor at Bushehr, particularly since the Bushehr reactor is located in a sensitive area owing to its geographical proximity to vital installations and populated areas.

The Council also demanded that Israel accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and subject all its nuclear facilities to the international inspections regime of IAEA, and requested the international community to pressure Israel to do so.

The Council renewed its call to turn the Middle East, including the Gulf region, into a region free of all weapons of mass destruction.

With regard to Iraq, the Council reviewed developments in the Iraqi situation and expressed its regret at the continuing deterioration of the security situation and the increase in the number of Iraqi deaths as a result of acts of terrorism, violence and sectarian strife, and emphasized the following:

- The importance for all segments of Iraqi society to reject differences and to solidify unity and solidarity in order to restore security and stability to Iraq;

- The importance of ensuring the successful outcome of the ongoing political process in Iraq through enhanced national reconciliation efforts, which would help to preserve Iraq's unity and ensure the triumph of Iraqi national interests over all considerations;

- The need for solidarity among all segments of the Iraqi people, and the importance for the Iraqi people to stand behind their legitimate national Government and leadership and to support them in overcoming obstacles, to thwart all efforts aimed at dividing Iraq along religious or racial lines and to achieve the unity, security, stability and prosperity they so ardently desire;

- The importance of non-interference in the internal affairs of Iraq and the importance of the commitment of other States to the same approach.

The Council re-emphasized the importance of security and stability in Iraq so that friendly and brotherly States and the international community might be able to provide assistance in the areas of economic and social development as well as reconstruction.

It urged the United Nations to continue its efforts to resolve outstanding issues such as the return of Kuwaiti property and the Kuwaiti national archives as well as determining the fate of the remaining prisoners of Kuwait and other nationalities.

The Council reviewed developments in the Sudan and emphasized the following:

- The importance of the peace agreement concluded between the Government of the Sudan and opposition groups under the auspices of the African Union and signed in Abuja, Nigeria, on 5 May 2006;
- The need for this agreement to end the bloodshed among the brotherly people of the Sudan and bring about security and stability throughout that country;
- Its hope that an agreement would be concluded between the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan with regard to the deployment of international forces in the Darfur region and its hope that the Government of the Sudan would be able to achieve security and stability and devote itself to realizing development, progress and prosperity for the brotherly Sudanese people.

The Council reviewed the distressing developments of the past few months in Somalia and expressed its hope that the Government of Somalia and the leaders of the Union of Islamic Courts would come together and repudiate violence and embrace dialogue and reconciliation so as to achieve national unity, put an end to strife and guarantee stability, thus allowing Somalia to concentrate its efforts on rebuilding and development.

In that regard, the Council welcomed the peace agreement concluded by the Government of Somalia and the Union of Islamic Courts at a meeting held in the Sudan on 4 September 2006. The Council expressed its hope that the agreement would promote the unity of Somalia and the return of security and stability to the country.

The Ministerial Council endorsed the nomination by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of Ibrahim bin Abdul Aziz Al-Sheddi, Deputy Minister of Education in charge of foreign relations, for the post of President of the Permanent Arab Committee on Human Rights of the League of Arab States. The Council also endorsed the nomination by the State of Kuwait of Kazem Behbehani for the post of Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO).

Issued in Jeddah on 12 Sha'ban A.H. 1427 (5 September A.D. 2006)